



“The 2008 Annual Meeting was a wonderful example of caBIG™ connectivity in action, as a diverse group of professionals came together with the common goal of speeding new treatments and cures to patients. I am inspired to see how this initiative has grown over the last five years to make this our best meeting yet—and I have every confidence that year six will bring further expansion into new domains...”

-Dr. Kenneth Buetow, Associate Director for Bioinformatics and Information Technology, NCI Director, Center for Biomedical Informatics and Information Technology, NCI

The 2008 caBIG™ Annual Meeting was the largest to date—not just in attendance, but in the scope of the information shared and the number of new organizations represented. Attendees heard real-life case studies of how institutions are adopting and deploying caBIG™ to improve their clinical and research capabilities and “peeked under the hood” of caBIG™ to become familiar with the technical details of caBIG™ tools and infrastructure.

The caBIG™ Newcomer’s Session was attended by more than 700 researchers, clinicians, and informaticians seeking to learn how caBIG™ tools and technologies can advance their work. Not only did this session engage individuals who were unfamiliar with caBIG™, it drew people who were seeking actionable information to use when deploying caBIG™ in their organizations. Throughout the meeting, attendees expressed their desire and readiness to “get connected” with caBIG™ and called on the existing community to shepherd them through the process.



Dr. Kenneth Buetow, NCI Associate Director for Bioinformatics and Information Technology and Director of the NCI Center for Biomedical Informatics and Information Technology (NCICBIIT) opens the Annual Meeting.



Hack-a-thon attendees collaborate on caBIG™ tool development and deployment.

“I’ve been watching caBIG™ for several years, and based on what I see here I’m ready to try some of these tools. I just need a little help getting started...”

“I can’t believe that there were only 100 people here five years ago—I’m glad that I came at such an exciting time!”

-Overheard from attendees during a break at the Newcomer’s Session

For those wanting to install caBIG™ and looking for guidance, the first six Enterprise Support Network Knowledge Centers—groups created specifically to help organizations and individuals navigate the road to caBIG™ interoperability—were officially announced at the conference. The first-ever caBIG™



World's Fair drew large crowds throughout the meeting and served as a place for attendees to catch up with old friends and forge new connections within the caBIG™ community. Attendees interacted with more than 100 live tool demonstrations, posters, and exhibitors, all organized by area of interest. Attendees were also able to speak with representatives from the newly designated Knowledge Centers. Eighteen caBIG™ tools and technologies were available for hands-on learning, and caBIG™ community members walked visitors through posters detailing ongoing research projects that have been made more fruitful and efficient with caBIG™.

Stimulating plenary sessions gave insight about the role caBIG™ is poised to play in the 21st century transformation of both research and healthcare. caBIG™ is already connecting the cancer research community (46 NCI-designated Cancer Centers; 10 Community Cancer Centers) and is forming part of the architecture of the Nationwide Health Information Network. In addition, caBIG™ is bridging international borders, with programs to share infrastructure and tools with the cancer research community in the United Kingdom and preliminary discussions with research centers in Shanghai and India.

In his plenary remarks, Dr. Kenneth Buetow (NCI) described the pathway he envisions to a new model for biomedicine. He noted that caBIG™ has already produced the tools and infrastructure needed to enable the key functions of molecular medicine, and in coming months and years it can be expanded to bring all the previously-siloed constituencies together in what some people describe as a “rapid learning” healthcare system, in which clinical outcomes information informs discovery research and patient care is linked to clinical research.

Attendees also learned first-hand how organizations like Baylor College of Medicine and Georgetown University are realizing this 21st century vision by deploying caBIG™-compatible tools and infrastructure to facilitate research. In addition to the formal presentations, attendees were able to see “caBIG™ in Action” in video case studies showing the research underway at those institutions.

Dr. Robert Kolodner (National Coordinator for Health Information Technology in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) provided a road map to show how information technology will play a crucial role in an integrated healthcare system and discussed how caBIG™ is enabling the clinical, research, and information technology communities to travel down that path. Dr. Kolodner pointed out that the first leg of this journey is already underway, as caBIG™ has established a common set of standards and vocabulary across which many organizations can communicate and share information.

Even the traditional “Hack-a-thon” held on Tuesday evening took a step forward from development of caBIG™ tools to implementation by becoming an impromptu “Deploy-a-thon,” where first-timers learned from caBIG™ veterans how to quickly install several caBIG™ tools.



Attendees were drawn to the large number of posters at the first-ever caBIG™ World's Fair.

“There were a number of requests made during plenary talks for us to have a demonstration on how to deploy these tools. So, we converted a bit of the Hack-a-thon space into a “Deploy-a-thon.” People were so interested and engaged that we actually had to turn out the lights to call it a night!”

-Mark Adams, Ph.D., caBIG™ Project Manager

Amid all the looking forward to the future of caBIG™, there were a few chances to look back on past successes as well. The 2008 Recognition Awards provided an opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of many individuals and groups from a variety of organizations that has led to the success of caBIG™ to date.

“Everyone has been working hard to achieve broader deployment within the cancer community. The diversity of this year’s awardees shows how much the initiative has grown over the past year!”

-Mary Jo Deering, Ph.D., Director for Informatics Dissemination, NCI Center for Bioinformatics



Live demos of caBIG™ tools attracted many attendees.

At the conclusion of the 2008 Annual Meeting, attendees were sent “out to the streets” to implement what they had learned. The 2008 meeting shows that caBIG™ has entered an exciting new phase, where the promises of the past few years are starting to be realized, and caBIG™ compatibility across the cancer community will have a profound impact on research and care delivery. 2009 is sure to bring more exciting developments, better tools, and an even more diverse and robust community!